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Navalny Ends Prison Hunger Strike

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny is ending his three-week hunger strike, he announced Friday.

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Navalny's health has seriously deteriorated in jail. **AP**

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny ended his three-week hunger strike Friday, saying it had resulted in "huge progress" and thanking his supporters.

In a post on Instagram, Navalny said he was following the advice of his supporters and doctors, who had warned he could die "at any minute," if he continued to refuse meals in the prison colony where is serving a two and a half year sentence on charges he calls politically motivated.

"Two months ago, people were laughing at my requests for medical help. I was given no medicine. A month ago, I was laughed in the face for asking things like 'what is my diagnosis?' and 'can I see my own medical records?'"

"But now I have been examined twice by a team of civilian doctors ... Their words that 'very

soon there will be no one to treat' ... deserve attention. Taking into account all the circumstances, I am getting out of the hunger strike" Navalny wrote.

Related article: Supporters Protest Across Russia for Release of Ailing Navalny

Thousands of Russians took to the streets Wednesday to protest his imprisonment and demand he be given access to his doctors, which prison authorities had repeatedly refused.

Navalny's health has seriously deteriorated in jail and he has lost more than 15 kilograms since his arrest. He went on hunger strike to demand proper medical care for a range of ailments. Navalny had also claimed prison officers were torturing him by waking him up every hour in the night — a procedure conducted because the opposition politician had been labelled a flight risk.

Navalny said he was still demanding access to his own doctor and warned of ongoing health concerns. "I am losing sensation in parts of my arms and legs, and I want to understand what it is and how to treat it," he said.

The hunger strike lasted 24 days and Navalny said he had been advised it would take the same length of time to return to a normal eating regime. "They say that is even harder — so wish me luck."

The Kremlin critic was poisoned on a flight last August and medivaced to Germany for treatment. He returned to Russia in January, where he was arrested on arrival for failing to show up for parole meetings under the terms of a suspended sentence for embezzlement charges that have been widely dismissed by human rights lawyers, Western governments and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) as unfair.

This story is being updated.

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